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[Pacific Partnership 2016: The Positive Power of Saying 'Yes'](#)

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By Lt. Jen Knapp, Entomology department head, directorate of public health, Pacific Partnership 2016



Vietnam (July 20, 2016) Hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) sits anchored off the coast of Da Nang, during its third mission stop of Pacific Partnership 2016. Mercy is joined in Da Nang by JS Shimokita (LST-4002) and Vietnam People's Navy ship Khánh Hòa for Pacific Partnership. Partner nations are working side-by-side with local organizations to conduct cooperative health engagements, community relation events and subject matter expert exchanges to better prepare for natural disaster or crisis. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Elizabeth Merriam/Released)

It all began with an email asking for volunteers to take the lead on events in Vietnam for Pacific Partnership 2016. There was very little detail about what the events would be or any requirements that may be needed but I made the decision to say "yes." And that little decision ended up



Ens. Brian Piaschyk, assigned to the joint staff of Pacific Partnership 2016, performs for patients and providers during a health engagement at Hoa Chau Commune Health Center near Da Nang, Vietnam. Pacific Partnership

recently completed a mission stop in Da Nang, marking the third consecutive year the mission has visited the city and worked alongside their counterparts in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, medical, and engineering; continuing to strengthen relationships among partner nations to enhance collective disaster response preparedness. (U.S. Navy photo by Lt. Jennifer Knapp)

being one of the most rewarding “yes’s” of my entire deployment.

I should have probably begun by saying I am an entomologist. One of the best parts of my job is the flexibility that comes with very few people knowing exactly what an entomologist does (for the record we study insects and engage in preventive medicine a

ctivities surrounding insect borne diseases). So when an entomologist was put in charge of the largest collaborative health engagement (CHE) in Vietnam no one really batted an eye. I on the other hand was nervous. I had never worked in a hospital or clinic and I was tasked with organizing primary care and optometry services for 400 patients in two days at a remote clinic.

From the start I was lucky that I had a strong chief, Chief Hospital Corpsman Winchell Delaresma, who stood by my side and gave me the confidence to lead a team of 40 physicians, pharmacists, administration, optometrists and corpsmen in a completely new environment. One of the best things I did was make the conscience decision to say “yes” to as much as I possibly could without compromising the mission or patient safety.

So when Ens. Brian Piaschyk asked if he could come and play his cello for the patients I said yes, even when the instrument took up space and, let’s be honest, it seemed like an odd request. When the pharmacy team asked for extra manning, to include a Vietnamese speaking pharmacy tech, I said yes, even if it meant more paperwork. And, when the chaplain wanted to take up two valuable spots on my manifest, I said yes.

Those little yes’s paid off.

By the end of the two days we provided care to more than 500 patients far exceeding expectations. The entire team banded together and every person gave their all to ensure our patients were given the best care possible. In the end, saying yes to something completely outside my comfort zone resulted in my most rewarding experience on Pacific Partnership and I will always be grateful for the opportunity.

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